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Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition

al-Ḥudaybiya

(656 words)

, OR AL-ḤUDAYBIYYA , a medium-sized village on the edge of the *ḥaram* or sacred territory of Mecca, one *marḥala* from Mecca itself. Both the village and the Mosque of the Tree (presumably on the site of the pledge described below) were unknown in the time of al-Fāsi (d. 832/1429). One authority says the name was derived from a dome-shaped or hump-like (*ḥadbā'*) tree, but this may be conjecture.

The village gave its name to an important Muslim expedition from Medina, led by Muḥammad, in Dhu 'l-Ḳa'da of the year 6 (March 628). Muḥammad had a dream (cf. Ḳur'ān, XLVIII, 27) in which he saw himself performing the rites of the lesser pilgrimage (*'umra*) at Mecca, and decided to make an expedition to Mecca for this ostensible reason, though in so doing he would also demonstrate to the pagans of Mecca that Islam was an Arabian religion and would not threaten the prestige of their sanctuary. Muḥammad hoped that the nomadic tribes near Medina would join him, but they saw little prospect of booty and were afraid the expedition might end in disaster. He set out with only about 1400 followers, mostly from Medina itself, and they had with them camels for the sacrifice. The Meccans, realizing that after the failure of their attempt to besiege Medina they would be considered weaklings if they let Muḥammad enter Mecca even as a pilgrim, sent out 200 cavalry to bar his way. These Muḥammad eluded by taking an unusual and very difficult route, and so reached al-Ḥudaybiya on the edge of the *ḥaram*. Here he decided to halt and negotiate.

A number of emissaries came and went between himself and the Meccans. Eventually a treaty to last ten years was agreed on, of which the following were the chief provisions: for the present, Muḥammad and his followers were to withdraw, but in the next year Mecca would be evacuated for three days to let them perform the *‘umra*; there was to be no raiding between the two parties; Muḥammad was to send back to Mecca anyone of Quraysh (presumably minor or woman) who came to him without permission of his or her protector; and others than Quraysh were to be free to enter into alliance with either side. On the conclusion of the treaty Muḥammad and his followers sacrificed their animals and returned to Medina. Many were disappointed; some thought Muḥammad’s policy mistaken. The expedition to Khaybar about six weeks later was in part to console them for this disappointment. A year after the original expedition Muḥammad performed the pilgrimage with a party of about 2000. The treaty continued in force for only about ten months more, because a quarrel between allies of the contracting parties led to Muḥammad’s victorious entry into Mecca (Ramaḍān 8/March 630).

While the Muslims were at al-Ḥudaybiya negotiating, it came to be believed that one of their envoys, ‘Uthmān b. al-‘Affān, had been killed. Muḥammad then called on them to take an oath to support him, known as the Pledge of Good Pleasure (*bay‘at al-riḍwān*) or the Pledge under the Tree. It is usually said to have been an oath not to flee, but it is more likely that (as stated by one authority in al-Wāḳidī) it was an oath to follow Muḥammad in whatever he decided. If the latter, the oath marked an increase in Muḥammad’s constitutional powers. *Riḍwan* is used because Qur’ān, XLVIII, 18 says ﷻ God was “well pleased (*raḍīya*) with the believers when they pledged themselves under the tree”.

(W. Montgomery Watt)

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